



Sustainable funding for recreation access on state lands

SSB 5622 and HB 1796: Concerning recreation access on state lands



State lands are vital to Washington's quality of life, providing parks and recreation activities that generate billions of dollars annually for Washington's economy.

Spending by campers, hikers, boaters, fishers, hunters, wildlife watchers and other users of state lands supports small businesses and creates jobs across the state.

The Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) manages more than 5 million acres of state lands for recreation. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) manages 843,000 acres of recreational land and nearly 700 water-access sites. The State Parks and Recreation Commission operates 119 developed parks and other recreation properties totaling 120,000 acres statewide.

Problem: The lack of stable, sustainable funding has put state lands—and the parks and recreation opportunities they offer—at risk. Governor Gregoire's proposed 2011-13 budget would remove virtually all state General Fund tax support for state parks and recreation lands.

Unless a new source of funding is identified to replace lost General Fund support, the majority of state parks would be reduced to zero service and gates closed, and DNR and WDFW also would be forced to close some recreation lands. The proposed permit would minimize the need for service reductions.

Solution: To maintain recreation access on state lands, State Parks, WDFW and DNR have jointly requested legislation to provide sustainable funding.

Substitute Senate Bill 5622 and House Bill 1796 would allow the three agencies to require recreation land users to annually purchase a vehicle-access permit, good for access to all state parks and recreation lands. The permit, dubbed the Discover Pass, would cost \$30 per year, or could be purchased for \$10 for single-day use.

Permit proceeds would be dedicated to operate and maintain state parks and other state-owned recreation lands.

Contact Information:

Brian Hovis
State Parks Legislative Liaison
(360) 902-8504
brian.hovis@parks.wa.gov
parks.wa.gov

Ann Larson
WDFW Legislative Liaison
360.902.2226
ann.larson@dfw.wa.gov
wdfw.wa.gov

Heath Packard
DNR Legislative Liaison
(360) 902-1015
heath.packard@dnr.wa.gov
dnr.wa.gov



Sustainable funding proposed for state lands— Proposal detail:

The proposed legislation would:

- Create an annual vehicle-access permit for use of all State Parks, WDFW and DNR recreation lands. The permit would cost \$30 annually, or \$10 for a one-day pass.
- Permits would be sold through the state Department of Licensing and also would be available on WDFW's existing WILD recreational licensing system and through recreational license vendors.
- Allocate Discover Pass revenue among the three agencies based on General Fund reductions for land and parks operation in the Governor's proposed 2011-13 budget:
 - 84 percent — State Parks (\$60 million need)
 - 8 percent — DNR (\$5.5 million need)
 - 8 percent — WDFW (\$5.5 million need)
- The Discover Pass will be required for vehicle access to recreation on state lands owned or managed by WDFW, DNR, and State Parks. Off-road vehicles (ORVs) such as ATVs or dirt bikes that are required to have ORV tabs are exempt from the Discover Pass. Recreation uses include:
 - Non-motorized use, including hiking, mountain biking, horse and pack stock
 - Motorized use, includes off-road vehicles (ORVs) such as single-track/motorcycles, quads/or all-terrain vehicles, four-wheel-drives/4x4s, and snowmobiles.)
 - Dispersed recreation, includes hunting, fishing, paragliding, mushroom, brush and berry gathering
 - Some camping and boat launching
- The vehicle-access permit would be available at a cost of \$7 annually for certain licensed fishers and hunters using only WDFW lands.